

# FURY AFTER CUP TIE IS CANCELLED

By Philip Smith

WYCOMBE WANDERERS and Blyth Spartans blasted Whitley Bay referee Ken Redfern after yesterday's FA Trophy tie was called off 55 minutes before kick off.

Football League referee Redfern declared Blyth's Croft Park pitch playable on Tuesday night, but after Wycombe travelled and hundreds of fans gathered for the game the tie was ruled out by match referee John Maxson.

The cup-tie will now be staged on Saturday at 3 p.m.

Wycombe's officials claimed Redfern's decision was "irresponsible" and had cost them £2,000 in travelling charges.

Blyth slammed Redfern's Tuesday night decision in declaring the match on as "farical."

Wycombe's general manager, Brian Lee, stormed: "It has cost us £2,000 in travelling costs which will have to be paid for by Blyth out of the gate receipts. It was an irresponsible decision by the referee on Tuesday that caused all this.

"This has arisen because

one ref does not agree with the other — if they would accept each other's decisions we would know where we were.

"We left our ground at 8 a.m. this morning and flew from Heathrow Airport to Newcastle. A decision should have been taken to avoid us travelling."

"Blyth will have to meet double expenses out of the gate money now if that falls short we will have to share the losses—so both sides will probably lose through this."

Wycombe manager, Andy Williams, said: "The situation is really farical. We have had to undergo the cost of getting here, travel difficulties and the problems of getting people off work when we find the match should have been called off on Tuesday."

"I'm amazed that the ref could look at the pitch and then call a club up to come and play here just because he thought it might thaw. Possibly he could get a job as a weather forecaster."

Blyth chairman, Jim Turney, said: "It was a ridiculous decision yesterday to say the match was on. As far as I'm concerned when I saw it

yesterday it was not playable.

"We will not be making a complaint about this because everyone makes mistakes.

"I think the match referee made the right decision in calling the game off today."

Blyth boss, Jack Marks, said: "The match should have been called off last night because there was no way it was playable."

Marks was glad the match referee postponed the game.

"When you play football for enjoyment if you fall down and break a leg on a pitch like this then you are off work for a long time and you lose money and your family suffer. It's different if you are a professional and could be supported by your club."

Match referee, John Maxson, of Ashton-under-Lyne, said: "I got here at 11.30 a.m. on Wednesday and thought the pitch unfit.

"In fairness to people who were already travelling I waited until 1 p.m. for a further inspection before deciding to call it off.

"The pitch was hard,

dangerous and rutted. There was no way it could go on."

Mr Maxson will inspect Croft Park at 8 a.m. on Saturday morning and declare then if the match will go on.

Mr Redfearn, of Melbourne Crescent, Whitley Bay, has been a referee for 16 years. He is in his last year on the Northern League list.

He said: "At 3 p.m. on Tuesday the pitch was completely playable apart from one strip beside the players' tunnel. The only problem was some small ruts.

I contacted Blyth Valley's Parks Superintendent, Mr Ken Earnshaw, and he said he would try and deal with the ruts. "At the time the pitch was soft and would take a stud. There was no doubt, no problem at all."

Mr Earnshaw said: "There was a severe frost on Tuesday night and it was just impossible to do anything to the pitch on Wednesday morning.

"The referee asked me to put a roller on but the ground was just too hard. We did everything humanly possible to get the game on but it was no use."